

Hamilton scores 18 in win

By DAVID WILSON
Senior staff writer

As Venson Hamilton walked into the post-game interview room Thursday, Nebraska Coach Danny Nee put a hand on the senior center's shoulder.



Nee

"Look at this," Nee said, pointing to the stat sheet. "You led the team in scoring, rebounds and turnovers."

"Turnovers." Though he missed more shots than he made, Hamilton led the

Cornhuskers with 18 points and 17 rebounds in a 67-61 exhibition win over Pella Windows at the Bob Devaney Sports Center on Thursday.

Overall, Nee said he was pleased with NU's first game effort of the season, despite 18 team turnovers — four committed by Hamilton.

"He has to show up every night,"

Nee said. "He's one of the important aspects of this team. He gets a double-double and I expect more out of him — a hell of a lot more."

Aside from the loss of point guard Tyrone Lue, the Huskers took the court without guard Cookie Belcher, who bruised his thigh Tuesday in practice.

With junior-college transfer Joe Holmes running the point, Nee was forced to work with different offensive combinations. Holmes, Nee said, will continue to start at point guard.

"The combinations we had on the floor without Cookie were combinations we have not played before," Nee said. "So we were an irregular heart beat from day one."

Filling the shoes of last season's leading scorer, Holmes took just two shots — missing both — in 18 minutes on the court.

But Holmes said he was just glad to get a Division I game under his belt.

"I got all the pressure off my back," said Holmes, a transfer from Tyler, (Texas) Junior College. "All I can do is relax and play. It's a hard job, but I'm up for the challenge."

Also reaching double figures in

scoring were senior forward Larry Florence and freshman guard Cary Cochran, who both scored 10 points.

Playing behind Holmes, Cochran, who sat out last season after having surgery on his right ankle, saw his first game action since playing high school ball in March 1997.

Cochran was 2 of 4 from behind the 3-point line, including a bucket with one minute, 26 seconds remaining in the game which gave the Huskers their final 6-point lead.

"I have a lot of confidence in my jump shot," Cochran said. "That's my game — the outside shot."

His defense, on the other hand, is another story.

"He has to guard at the other end," Nee said. "He made me use one of my timeouts — but I think he's going to be fine."

The Huskers will take the court again Tuesday at 7:05 p.m. against Global Sports before opening the regular season at home against UNC-Greensboro on Nov. 14.

"It's so important that we start off good," Nee said. "We're under a magnifying glass."

Loss to Baylor forces NU into No. 2 seed

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"Coming off of this weekend," LeBlanc said, "we want the chance to get back into things."

Nebraska will have the chance to get back into things Friday, when it will play the winner of the Texas A&M/Iowa State game.

For the past two seasons, A&M has been the Huskers' foe in the championship game. But this year, the two rivals may meet in the semifinal round.

"It is a little weird," senior Becky Hogan said. "(A&M) is on the track right now, and they are coming on strong."

If NU is able to get into the final, they may run into Baylor again.

The No. 1-seeded Bears will play the winner of the Texas/Missouri game in the semifinals. The Longhorns were

the only Big 12 team not to lose to Baylor this season, tying the Bears 0-0 on Oct. 11.

Walker said the possibility of facing two Texas schools this weekend isn't made any easier by the fact the tournament is played in the Lone Star State.

"When you play (in San Antonio) it's not a neutral site," Walker said. "It's just another road weekend."

Nebraska has had success on the "road" during the past two years, winning the conference tournament two years ago and finishing runner-up last season.

Hogan said the team, especially the seniors, won't be happy if last year's result repeats itself.

"We aren't planning on coming home runners-up," Hogan said. "It will be a huge disappointment if we come back empty-handed."

Climbing scary, rewarding class

Munson on Sports



By TODD MUNSON
Staff writer

True or false: Rock climbing is an inherently dangerous sport.

Thinking that there was no way the university would allow students to partake in a dangerous activity, I marked false.

I was wrong and, suddenly, all the more paranoid about trusting my life to a piece of nylon and a skinny little rope.

Aside from dying a broke, loveless and lonely old man, my only other real fear is heights. Last spring when I N-Rolled for the inaugural offering of Climbing I, I figured I'd get the whole height issue out of the way and breeze through another one credit hour physical education mini-course and get that much closer to graduation.

As fate would have it, rock climbing turned out to be one of the most challenging classes I've taken at dear old Nebraska U.

After we passed the written exam and learned all the knots needed for safe climbing, which made this portion quite difficult for a kid who didn't master shoe tying until the fourth grade, we were ready to hit the wall.

With death being one misfastened harness or poorly tied knot away, climbing, along with the operation of power tools, heavy machinery and toaster ovens, is not a sport that one should partake while under the influence of drugs. Leave that to the fellows with the hacky sacks.

The climbing wall was a bit intimidating at first. But once it was proved that the little rope could indeed support the weight of my big ol' booty and the constriction of the harness on my little friends became tolerable, climbing turned out to be quite fun.

But then we had to go outside.

Like all the other outdoor education classes, climbing required a weekend of field experience. So, a couple of Saturdays ago, at an ungodly hour, our class eschewed a Husker football Saturday and departed for Blue Mounds State Park in scenic Luverne, Minn.

(Note to our state Legislature: When y'all meet in January, please set aside some money to build some cliffs,

preferably just on the edge of campus, because driving four hours to the nearest worthwhile cliff is a bit excessive for a state that claims to have it all.)

Before we could climb, our instructors had to set up routes. Out in the wild there was no industrial grade metal bar to loop a rope around. Instead they finagled various anchors, big and small, into the cracks in the rock. If all went as planned, these little gizmos would, theoretically of course, keep us from plummeting to instant doom.

To say that outdoor climbing is a bit different than indoor climbing is quite the understatement. Gone were the comfortably shaped holds of the climbing wall. Outside, you grab what you can, which a lot of times means very sharp rock. And, unlike the wall, outside you're faced with dealing with Mother Nature. Betcha didn't know that big mamajama spiders love to live in the sides of cliffs. Neither did I, until I looked more than several in the face on my way up.

By the day's end, climbing out in the wild had become tolerable, and my thoughts drifted away from high places and began to focus on that lonely old man part.

But on day two, my fears came back with a vengeance.

Our trusty instructors, Evan and Justin, decided to teach us the art of rappelling, which, in a nutshell, means stepping off the side of a cliff and sliding down a rope, just like in those commando movies.

Not wanting to put off instant death, I stepped into line after the first brave souls failed to die. At the top of cliff I commented that it's hard to say Danger is your middle name when your knees are shaking.

I'd probably still be up there if it weren't for the verbal goading of my classmates waiting in line. They said the first step's a doozy, but the feeling you get when you feel the rope is the only thing holding you 50 feet above the ground is frightening enough to make you apologize for all the bad things you've ever done.

Before I began the descent to the welcoming ground below, I questioned what person in his right mind would willingly do this on a Sunday morning. However, when I reached the bottom, I laughed when I thought of all the people still wasting away in bed — after I kissed the ground, of course.

Rappelling off that cliff was a lot like jumping off the high board for the first time. Even though all the other kids were doing it just fine, it was still freaky as all get out until you did it yourself and learned that wasn't so bad. Heck, I even rappelled a second time minus the shaking knees.

Climbing I is being offered again in the spring. If you have the time or desire, sign up for it. Not only is it a great way to build up your guns, but it's a great challenge both physically and mentally — much better than, say, Geology 101. Forget about learning about rocks. Go climb them.

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